TOMORROW IS TOO LATE

Findings from Raleigh International’s global consultation with young people
This generation of young people will change the world.

Millennials and Generation-Z are the most idealistic, most innovative, and most tolerant cohort of young people ever. Our global youth consultation reinforces this.

But young people face a world of uncertainty, change and crisis. They are told they are too young, too inexperienced, and too naïve to make a difference. They are told to accept injustice and inequality as part of life. They are told that some crises are too hard to solve. Their voices, their experiences, and their ideas are disregarded.

Our global consultation – spanning the development of the Covid-19 pandemic – reveals that this generation of young people refuse to accept this. The world as it exists now is not an option for them. Societies and economies where some are left behind are unacceptable. They will not allow the natural world to be destroyed. They will fight to ensure the rights and freedoms of all and the end of every type of discrimination. They believe in the power of people to change what governments, politicians and businesses can’t or won’t. They have the ideas to create the world they want, and they will not be silenced.

This determination and passion for a better world does not mean they want to go it alone. Far from it. They know they need partners to create networks and build platforms. They see the benefits of skills, knowledge, and training. They hope people of all ages will support their ideas and help deliver them.

This research is a deep insight into this youth generation and offers an exciting and hopeful vision for our global community at a difficult time. At Raleigh International, it has shown us the ways we need to change and the things we need to do to support young people to build a global movement and take action now. It will guide our approach and strategy. We hope through reading this you will choose to stand with young people too.

Now is the time for action not excuses, because tomorrow is too late.

Julian Olivier
CEO, Raleigh International
Raleigh International ran a consultation with young people from February to June 2020. This spanned the rapid evolution of the Covid-19 pandemic. It details and summarises the beliefs, perspectives, desires, and fears of over 100 young people from 11 countries. (Bermuda, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Singapore, Tanzania, and the United Kingdom).

The consultation was conducted almost exclusively by young people. It took the form of focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, workshops and online social media and survey engagement. Many of the participants are former Raleigh volunteers. Others are members of our local youth-led national societies, and some have no association with Raleigh at all.

The research findings are summarised and presented in the following sections:

7 Summary
11 The world young people demand
12 The world young people face
19 The world if young people were in charge
23 The barriers to young people taking action
26 The support young people need

Disclaimer
The names used in this publication are pseudonyms. To protect the privacy of the young people who took part in this research we have changed the names of participants.

The images used in this publication are not of the young people involved. This is to protect the privacy of the young people who took part in this research.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the participants. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions, views, or positions of Raleigh International, its subsidiaries, affiliations, partners, associations, staff, or volunteers.
I think the perfect world should mean that everybody is living happily and peacefully in a healthy environment, has healthy relationships with each other, and works and lives according to their wishes and desires.

Chuluun, age 22

SUMMARY

Young people know exactly the world they want to live in and the change that must happen to create it. They demand:

• A world where everyone can access what they need to be free, healthy, safe, educated and financially secure.

• A world which does not discriminate against people on the basis of their race, ethnicity, nationality, gender identity, gender expression, religion, ability, sexual orientation or socio-economic status, and where diversity is celebrated.

• A world where all leaders listen and are accountable.

• A world where collective responsibility for the natural world forms the basis of productive, fair and sustainable societies and economies.

This generation of young people see the world through the lenses of fairness, happiness, and wellbeing. They believe that achieving these is not only good for the individual but will help solve all our shared problems.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown young people the huge inequalities that exist globally. They refuse to accept them and demand a fairer world. They know what action they want to take and lead. They prioritise demands for access to free, high quality education and healthcare, support for youth employment and skills, and tackling the climate crisis.

They feel frustration and anger at the failures of generations of decision makers but won’t let this hold them back. They demand accountability and want to be accountable. They are going to break down barriers to youth participation in decision making. And they will end the discrimination which stops every young person having their say.

Young people want good leaders, but they also want to be good leaders. They want to work with others but aren’t afraid to challenge power and go around those who get in their way. They want others to stand in solidarity with them, proving we’re on their side, and that we listen to, trust and are willing to follow young people.

Young people demand action now, but they don’t always know what to do or where to start.

Young people have the passion, ideas and energy to create change. But it’s what they lack access to which stops them taking action. They want support and they highlight the importance of free, quality education and training. They want the skills, knowledge and networks they know they need to create the world they want to live in. Young people believe that current education systems don’t equip them for this. They want others to recognise this and support them with what they need.

Young people want the tools to build movements and create change. But they also want help to find meaningful work and to build a career. Lack of jobs and income is the major issue for young people globally. They believe the support they need to lead change in society can also help them to become leaders in their careers.
Young people want to meet their own needs and the needs of others. Young people want to be financially secure so they can be independent. Being secure means being able to meet their basic needs. Changing the world for free isn’t easy. Voluntary and social work takes up personal time and resources which many young people do not have. This is particularly true in countries where wages are low and employment opportunities are hard to come by. However, this won’t stop them taking action.

They want people to listen to their concerns about being ‘cheap labour’. Young people want to take an active role in changing the world. But they resent when this is expected of them without reward or recognition. They want their efforts to change the world to help create routes into secure employment or enterprise.

Young people need support but also want people to get out of their way.
Young people want independence and to be able to forge their own path. Entering adulthood is a transformational life stage. They want the freedom to choose what is right for them, to make mistakes and learn from them. This means gaining independence and being less reliant on (but more able to support) family structures.

They also want this from the people who support them to take action. They want those trying to help to fulfill the role of a partner, not a parent. They want people at all levels to look for ways to hand over more power and decision making to young people. They want a say in how decisions about their lives are made.

Young people want networks of likeminded changemakers.
Young people don’t want to go it alone, they want to bring others with them. They know they need support. But they also want to create and get access to their own networks of likeminded peers.

They want the tools and confidence to forge new connections. They believe organisations should create opportunities for young people to build their movement for change.

Young people are not all the same.
Young people want those in power and those supporting change to develop a more nuanced understanding of the needs of young people. They want inclusivity to be central to any work they lead or are part of. They understand that they might want the same world but this does not mean young people are the same all over the world.

Young people reject the existence of endemic inequalities and unequal structures. They want change which is transformational for all with no one left behind. They want partners and supporters to represent and reflect the diversity of young people.

Young people demand to have their voices heard and to hear those of other young people.
Young people value platforms which amplify their voice and give them the space to have their say. They want to see their views represented but they also want to hear the voices of other young people. They want partners who will speak to their own experiences and about the issues they care about. They see the diversity of views and ideas among young people as a strength. But they don’t want tokenism or to be used just for good branding or PR. They demand to be taken seriously. The mean what they say and want to be treated with the same respect as everyone else.
I think one of the most evident problems in our society today is that some people have a home theatre while some people can’t get a flu shot and die of pneumonia.

Qadan, age 24

The world young people demand.

“I think the perfect world should mean that everybody is living happily and peacefully in a healthy environment, has healthy relationships with each other, and works and lives according to their wishes and desires.” Chuluun, age 22

Young people demand a fairer world now. A world where the happiness and wellbeing of all people is prioritised and achieved. A world where inequalities and discrimination are eradicated.

They believe such a world will not only benefit individuals. It will enable and create harmony between people – in our economic and political lives, as well as personal – and with our natural environment.

“A world where people are in harmony with nature and that this harmony also exists with economic growth.” Angelo, age 27

It will also allow them to lead a ‘good life’ and enable more people to be a ‘good person’. This means being less concerned with materialism and profit, and more concerned with caring for others, personal development and protecting our planet.

This is not naive. Young people are clear about the difficulties and scale of change required. But they believe it is urgent and necessary.

Young people also understand that to create such a society, individuals need to feel that their own needs are met. They see that to achieve the world they want, key needs around health, education, financial security, and personal freedom need to be met.

“First of all, access to high-quality medical services. I think one of the most evident problems in our society today is that some people have a home theatre while some people can’t get a flu shot and die of pneumonia.” Qadan, age 24

Young people’s understanding of health goes beyond important base human rights like water, shelter, and food, and is focused on access to good healthcare services and education. They believe healthcare and education should be available free to all, or at a fair price guaranteeing universal access. They oppose current inequities in public services, such as those around education and gender, or healthcare and ethnicity.

Health and education are clear areas where young people believe decision makers must take action. While state action was not seen as the way to meet their desire for financial security, it’s clear access to such services, and the opportunities they provide, is seen as going hand in hand with being financially secure.

“In my perfect world, I would be financially stable and independent, not depending on my family, or any other individual. I think it’s very important to be financially independent, because only then I would have my own agency.” Putri, age 23

Young people’s ambitions for financial security mean being able to meet their most basic needs. Young people do not want handouts and do not want to depend on others for economic stability. In fact, financial security
is seen as the path to personal independence, leading the life they wish to lead, and helping others.

However, young people do want a world where action is taken by governments to address the systems which entrench economic inequality. A key area for this is in providing equal employment opportunities, training and support for all young people looking to enter the jobs market. Young people are aware that endemic inequalities exist and think many societies and economies are structured to favour some over others. They want to change this balance to make society fairer and more equal. This includes achieving gender equality, addressing discrimination of all types and tackling socio-economic inequality.

“I would like a network of people that understands me and supports me, maintaining healthy, social, adult relationships, I guess.” Sarnai, age 22

While there is a clear desire for independence, young people don’t want to go it alone. They need and want support. They want a world where communities and networks flourish, so they play their part. They want people to spend less time on themselves, and on their phones, and more time on others.

“Even if we are aware of the issues and want to take action, we might need just a little bit more nudge to really get off our phones and go out and make changes.” Chi, age 26

This desire for greater collective action is most important when it comes to the addressing the climate crisis, biodiversity conservation and responsible production and consumption.

“We need a relationship with the environment that is associated with caring for biodiversity and also harmony with architecture, industrial production and urban planning.” Eli, age 27

THE WORLD YOUNG PEOPLE FACE.

Their present.
The Covid-19 pandemic is affecting the lives of young people globally. But young people are aware that we’re not ‘all in this together’. They know the pandemic is affecting different groups in different ways. They are angry that this is due to inequalities and injustices that weren’t fixed before Covid-19.

Young people understand the role of class, gender, age, race, ethnicity, caste, nationality, sexuality and ability in their experiences. They are not willing to let this continue to be the case.

Young people see that the pandemic has created new problems. But they recognise that most of them already existed and are exacerbated by public health concerns and the socio-economic impact of lockdowns. For many the frustrations and anxieties of the pandemic are all too familiar.

“Here it is not just a pandemic, we have our own socioeconomic problems, we had these problems before the pandemic, the pandemic has just made it even more stressful.” Joselyn, age 22
Many young people recognised that the main outcome of the pandemic for them was the disruption caused to everyday life and near future plans.

“It planned to switch my career with my postgraduate degree, but corporations are now much more weary – I have to postpone switching my career.” Jason, 26

“I had plans to move cities, but lockdown was announced out of nowhere. My programme was cancelled, we were all sent back. The rules of the lockdown were extended and confusing. We lost all our jobs.” Sanjilt, age 24

Some young people, identifying as middle class, noted that they were not impacted by the pandemic to the same degree as others. For example, changes to their routine had been less drastic due to the ability to work from home, availability of reliable internet connection, and government support.

The loss of income and risk or experience of unemployment was common. The widespread economic impact meant that most participants experienced household income being partially or entirely reduced.

Young people identifying as working class reported more unemployment due to the greater need for in-person activities in their workplaces, which they believed increased their risk of contracting Covid-19. These young people were also more likely to experience food shortages and a lack of internet access.

“It has impacted my life because there is little access to get a job – if it was difficult before then it is even more difficult now – there is a political crisis on top of Covid.” Diego, age 21

Young people also said their mental health concerns were increasing due to the impact of the pandemic. Reasons for this include a lack of socialising, the worry of getting unwell, changes to income, the death of family members and friends, a change in routine, the loss of opportunities, living in close quarters with multiple family members, the frustration of staying indoors, extra responsibilities, and the added stress of social media misinformation. Again, they stated that these factors are having a greater impact on young people from working class backgrounds.

“As a young person – I used to go out a lot but now we’re stuck with relatives – this has really impacted my mental health” Ashma, age 26

Young people living in economically poorer areas also said they were prone to experiencing respiratory difficulties because of higher levels of pollution and limited sanitation facilities. Young people from poorer communities felt further stigmatised due to the pandemic, negatively impacting their mental health.

Young people are angry that the pandemic has shown and exacerbated deep inequalities that already existed.

“Covid-19 has drastically impacted my community because it is disproportionately affecting marginalised groups. The poorest groups are most likely to have chronic conditions that puts them at a higher risk of Covid-19 associated mortality.” Yasmin, age 24

Young people see gender as a big factor in determining their experience of the pandemic. Young females said their workload had increased due to a combination of working from home and an expectation to take on the bulk of domestic duties. A rise was also seen in domestic violence against women and sexual gender-based violence in the communities where young people were based. The health impact of lockdown on women was also greater, with young people highlighting reduced access to menstrual products. Young people were also concerned that women who needed medical attention were avoiding it due to the increased risk of abuse outside their homes.

“Women who are pregnant or who need a hospital are more in danger – you have to be cautious, even more so as a woman - It is very dangerous to go outside so you stay indoors even if you have a problem.” Shirisha, age 27

Their future.

“Before Covid, everyone was running after something, constantly on the run materialistically – now everything is on pause – it has put a light on how useless materialistic things are, kindness is more important.” Manish, age 25

Despite the largely negative experiences of young people around the world living through the pandemic, they felt positive shifts had taken place. They believe the world they want to live in might even be more possible than before. Young people are also dedicated to being at the centre of stopping Covid-19 and building back better. They are aware that the current pandemic is going to massively impact their future and the
change they can create now. But they are going do something about it and not passively accept it.

“We [young people] are not only the future, we are also the now.”
Jose, age 25

They understand their roles and responsibilities, both in terms of sharing good hygiene practices and following them. Many have promoted an increased uptake of good hygiene behaviours, like handwashing, and believe these must be maintained. Increased awareness among governments of the need to provide sanitation infrastructure was seen as a potential benefit.

“young people raise awareness it will be easier to understand.”
John, age 24

They acknowledge the risk of young people in spreading the disease and the need for an intergenerational approach to tackling it. They believe it is their duty to call out and fight misinformation online as they are the ones who can more easily spot it as digital natives.

Young people believe their leadership of climate and anti-racism movements in recent months and years makes them better placed than politicians to create and lead the change that needs to happen for everyone.

“Young people need to get more political, if getting into politics is the only way we can change our future then youth need to make their voices louder and become more political.”
Luka, age 23

The speed of the onset of the pandemic had also brought about benefits. Young people saw the forced adoption and updating of technology, with increased use of virtual communication, as a good thing.

They recognise the technology revolution could play into their hands and create more opportunity but are wary that some may be left behind. They also believe they have a role in ensuring social media can play a role in tackling Covid-19. They credit social media with bringing about new political awareness, solidarity and activism among their generation. Young people want to take back social media as a positive tool.

Young people also see their own frustrations with politics as a potential positive. They are adamant that they will not be depending on government alone to bring about positive change:

“We [youth] need to learn, to adopt and educate, we don’t need to rely on the government – if young people work together, we can create change.”
Akram, age 27

Young people are positive about the long-term wellbeing impacts of increased mental health awareness due to the anxieties created by the pandemic.

They also think environmental change and increased awareness of human impact on the planet is as another positive outcome. Young people want Covid-19 to show us that we can contribute to conserving and nurturing our environment globally if we enforce tighter restrictions.

The clear need for greater global unity amid increased nationalism are crucial. Young people are pleased that decision makers had behaved
CLIMATE CHANGE SHOULD BE DECLARED A GLOBAL EMERGENCY AND WE SHOULD WORK THE SAME WAY WE ARE WORKING TO TACKLE COVID-19.

Mosi, age 24

But not all of the changes that have taken place are positive for the future. Young people saw cultural shifts, such as increased online dependence and use of social media for news, as negative. The potential for new economic inequalities created between those who can work from home and those who cannot was also seen as a concern.

Many young people, particularly in working class communities, believed that the health impacts of the pandemic would be apparent in the future. There was deep concern that accessing decent work and opportunities would be difficult for young people in the future and that a decline in household incomes for some would further economic inequalities.

Young people worry Covid-19 is worsening the situation for countries that were already facing social crises and political instability. They think unrest and a demand for social justice will continue until action is taken to address underlying inequalities and broken systems.

THE WORLD IF YOUNG PEOPLE WERE IN CHARGE.

We asked young people to imagine they were responsible for decision making in their country and to highlight the issues they would tackle. They also highlighted the UN’s Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs) they want to take action on.

“I would start by delegating the tasks to people who are qualified, providing them with all the resources they need but couldn’t gain themselves, to make changes. I would endorse researchers, scientists, and educators with everything they need, I would subsidise the education and health sectors, pass legislation that raises the tax rates of the wealthy and pour resources into the enforcement system so that they would work efficiently and independently. I think that’s what leaders are supposed to do, lead people to the right direction, enable and mobilise the talented people to improve the situation.”

Qingshan, age 28

Inequality is unacceptable to young people because they know something can be done about it. They would create societies and economies built upon fairness and equity of access to basic services.

Young people also highlighted action on injustices in public services and economic systems,
They would take immediate steps to create good universal education to break cycles of poverty and inequality. Young people believe this can be done through Global Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Young people repeatedly mentioned the need for equal access to quality education from an early age, creating more opportunities for their future. They felt this was key to a better life and more independence. There was also a desire to transform current education systems.

“I would make sure the universities, colleges have committees which will be responsible in connecting students to different industries and institutions during field works and after graduating in order to help the students to have jobs. Also the committee will be responsible in providing skills and knowledge to students to employ themselves in case they do not find employment.”

Margaret, age 25

Young people strongly believe education will help them be more effective in tackling global challenges, including climate change. They argue that they would be more equipped to change the status-quo through the opportunities they could derive from employment and achieving Global Goal 8: Ensuring Decent Work and Economic Growth.

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Meiying, age 27

Young people also want to focus on health and wellbeing, including achieving Global Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all. There was a view that universal, free, high quality health care solves many problems. Young people want to ensure more preventative and proactive measure to keep people safe and healthy.

“For health, I would make universal free healthcare a reality. I also think it’s more important to take proactive measures so that people don’t get sick as easily in the first place.”

Amir, age 25

Young people linked health and wellbeing to supporting the fight against climate change. They stated that through taking a wellbeing approach to things like urban planning, jobs and consumption we will help mend the causes of climate change, linking to Global Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Frequent reference was also made to Global Goals 12: Responsible consumption and production, 13: Climate action and 15: Life on land.

“If I was the leader of my country, my first order of business would be to design new city plans. Then I would rally my friends and family to support me. I would convince people to put away their selfishness and join each other under the motto “Green Earth”, and do eco-friendly activities, and demand restoration for the damaged environment around the world.”

Temujin, age 27

Poverty was seen against a backdrop of discrimination and intersecting identities, particularly in relation to Global Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Young people willing to fight against inequalities, and unfairness.

“Create a series of policies to reduce and eradicate violations of gender equality; policies for equal payment of wages, also that people can access any job regardless of gender; policies to sanction violence not only against women but also against LGBTI+ people. I would also create policies for minority groups, for example, indigenous people and provide them the access to all the basic services and the access to any job.”

Sukh, age 25

“Without good education, we are not even able to approach other issues – the environment, equality, justice, etc. So we have got to start by educating people, including me. Look how I am miserably failing to answer these questions when I am the one who said these were the most important goals for me. We need to be better informed and educated.”

Meiying, age 27

Young people are angry about the unequal distribution of resources and subsequent inequalities of outcome suffered by marginalised groups. They want to contribute more meaningfully to the achievement of Global Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere. They want to rid themselves and others of the day to day worries of having inadequate resources.

“Most members of society are poor because there are not enough opportunities where people can earn money or access services, especially young people. Due to this it will be very difficult for me to achieve my dream for the society and the world.”

Kwasi, age 22

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where some find access easier than others. They argue corruption, a lack of just systems and accountability affects young people’s ability good life chances.

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Sukh, age 25
WE ARE TOLD WE ARE DISENGAGED POLITICALLY AND SOCIALLY BUT WE ARE NEVER TAUGHT HOW TO ENGAGE.

Tuya, age 29

THE BARRIERS TO YOUNG PEOPLE CREATING CHANGE NOW.

“I want to do something, but the problem is I don’t know what to do or how to do it.” Farah, age 24

Young people have clear passion and drive to tackle global issues, but they identified barriers they feel are stopping them from taking action now. Young people believe politics in many countries is a structural barrier. Not only because the political class choose to ignore young people but also because they do not trust political leaders to deliver.

“The government rarely delivers what they promised and implements policies to gain more votes that doesn’t have any long-term structural effect and the news are filled with charges of corruption of parliamentary and government members. On the other hand, younger generation seems to me like they simply don’t care, or even if we did, we don’t know from where to even begin with to bring about changes. Maybe, we’re just overwhelmed by all this negativity.” Harry, age 27

Young people feel that corruption, the illicit use of government funds and self-interest from politicians would prevent them from achieving their goals. At its core, they felt that ruling elites simply didn’t care enough about them or their communities.

“Government support to achieve the goals have been a challenge for a long time, some of the rules are not friendly with youth inputs and ways of being able to utilise their potentials. For instance, the ways of acquiring government loans is a very challenging issue to youths.” Adam, age 24

Young people don’t have the spaces or platforms to make their voices heard in the decision-making process. And even when they do, they are not seen as genuine leaders or valuable partners and participants. Often young people feel that politicians engage with youth-led movements for short-term gain or popularity, not to partner with them for real change.

“Governments think young people’s movements are pointless.” Jin, age 24

They are frustrated at intergenerational inequalities and the use or perception of age and lack of experience as a reason to ignore young people’s calls for action.

Young people want the state to play a role in the provision of healthcare, wellbeing, education, and work opportunities. But they also feel governments can get in the way of progress. This is particularly the case for countries where government permission is needed to start a social enterprise or receive grants from other organisations. The limiting of freedoms of speech and assembly were also seen as issues. Young people feel governments are not mobilising young people the right way.

Education was again an area of real concern for young people. The lack of skills, knowledge, experience and
training is a barrier to young people leading change on the issues they care about. They want this so they can become more politically and socially active.

“We are told we are disengaged politically and socially but we are never taught how to engage.”
Tuya, age 29

Young people feel attempting to make impact without vision or training was a barrier. The types of training young people stated they required included organisational skills, fundraising, advocacy, project management, recruiting members to civil society organisations, as well as how to effectively plan and carry out campaigns.

The unemployment created by Covid-19 has focused young people on the need for more skills so they can not only create change but find work to support themselves and their families.

Limited access to finance and start-up capital for young people is a major barrier for achieving both their personal goals and ensuring their wider contribution in society. They feel decision makers have failed to provide adequate support to young people either through employment policy or universal access. Or they feel it is only there for the privileged few. Young people have concluded that any financial security is dependent on their own ability to create opportunities for themselves.

“Awards and opportunities are not merit-based anymore, they can be bought. And we are so accepting of this that it is the social norm and that’s even furthering the issue. I have no idea why inequality came to exist, but I think it just keeps accumulating over time, you can raise capital with capital, while in this socioeconomic environment, you can’t really raise that much capital out of nothing.” Sophie, age 25

The digital divide has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Limited access to internet leaves those in rural locations feeling particularly disconnected from other young people.

Young people believe their self-perception and self-confidence, potentially correlating with early conversations relating to un-supportive enabling environments, is stopping them from leading change.

They also argue that certain characteristics within societies are barriers for collective action and cultural issues are seen as structural barriers in a number of countries.

“One of the biggest problems that prevent it is individualism and therefore the selfishness of people, this prevents us from thinking about the common good.” Angela, age 27

“Cultural and social issues like xenophobia, white supremacy, religious extremism, the whole idea of “otherness”. And economic issues like consumer culture, huge manufacture waste and pollution, and so on. I think most of these problems exist because of ignorance.” Yul, age 22
THE SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO LEAD.

“Encouraging young people, engaging them with issues, emphasising their importance in the solutions for issues. Empowering, training and mobilising young people to be more aware and to take action and be active. The emphasis on youth driven action is really important.”
Esen, age 22

Young people are enthusiastic about how their experience volunteering has enabled them to develop skills. They believed they improved their confidence, built initiative and learnt how their experience volunteering has enabled them to develop skills.

“She believed they improved their confidence, built initiative and learnt new perspectives on the world.

“Volunteering is a life changing experience for young people. You not only learn life lessons and help make an impact on the world but also gain experience.”
Anna, age 26

The development of leadership skills is a key benefit for young people. They believe volunteering helps them to create the world they want to see and allows them to lead by example so that others join in.

“It helped enhance my leadership skills and I became a better me. Volunteering not only creates youth leader but also inspires youth in the community to work.”
Peter, age 24

Young people want help developing technical skills. Through volunteering many developed skills in business development, CV writing, project planning, evaluation and research design techniques. They felt that projects working nationally with local young people were valuable spaces for skill development, as well as a space for creating partnerships and support networks.

“These changes cannot be done by the one person and it is quite hard. Instead, everyone must join their hands and support to each other.”
Prishya, age 26

Young people highlighted the importance of skills support from corporates and businesses during their time volunteering. The knowledge provided and the follow-up support from employees has enabled them to establish their own enterprises, develop more coherent business models and mentor other young people to lead change.

Young people believe they need skills-based training which increases their impact and adds to the credibility of their CVs. Topics included computer programming, campaign techniques, climate adaptation, experience in NGO management, and fundraising skills.

Training for personal and community-based development was seen as the best way to improve their impact. Mental health awareness training and support was also considered a high priority for the future.

Routes into the world of work and financial independence are at the forefront of young people’s thinking. They think the creation and provision of pathways to employment or internal opportunities from the organisations they are partnering with would be mutually beneficial.

Young people were also clear about the need for financial incentivisation. They believe this will allow them to ensure the sustainability of their impact, such as in delivering livelihoods support programmes after volunteering and mentoring other young people with resources to back their ideas and implementation.

While young people believe it is their responsibility to bring about the change and they are enthusiastic create the world they wish to see, they expressed discontentment over not being paid for their efforts and feeling like ‘cheap labour’. Committing to voluntary work is a challenge when lacking the resources to sustain themselves.

“I believe sustainable, long-term changes start small, from the grassroots. I can’t champion a fight against climate change or anything big like that. I have [S9] in my bank account, I’m in debt, and I have no sustainable income. Let me first devise a way to eat next week. But I – and indeed everyone – can do simple things.”
Tam, age 21

Young people also have a clear desire for the establishment of new organisations and collectives so they can be provided with new opportunities for networking and collaboration with other young people. Along with providing platforms for youth voice, young people also want to see mechanisms through which they can connect with mentors, community members and government officials.

But they also want organisations they partner with to engage more diverse groups of young people. They felt organisations supporting
young people could improve visibility in communities and on social media. to target the specific needs of young people from different contexts.

"More communication, more understanding of local youths and their situation. Better advertising and brand image, increasing incentives, because young people have so many distractions and such short attention span nowadays, so even if we are aware of the issues and want to take action, we might need just a little bit more nudge to really get off our phones and go out and make changes." Chi, age 26

Young people also felt that there was a need for organisations supporting them to take action to go beyond the volunteering programmes. They want innovative projects, online platforms and new networks and other opportunities outside of traditional model. Young people were particularly keen to see more programmes which combined training with exchange elements.

"I think we need a wider network for young people that are involved in volunteer works and other types of non-profit activities. We also need to increase the incentive for them to join such networks and organisations, and I think the best way to do that is to engage them with work that yields an immediate result...so that they would feel encouraged to do more." Jia, age 22

Participants also called for the strengthening of international networks and movements of young people. They want more spaces where youth can come together to share skills, experiences, resources, and deliver campaigns and projects. They believe they can gain from access to diverse sets of people and organisations who were also passionate about creating positive change. Through these networks, young people want to make connections and opportunities that will allow them to create greater impact.

At an individual level, young people need support to fulfil their financial needs, having platforms to voice their opinions and being able to express their vision and ideas. For these, they seek avenues for greater education, skill development and capacity building through more youth-designed projects.

"You should ensure that my voice is heard and my vision is recognised by the bigger world through designing youth workshop where we can speak out and able to be seen." John, age 21
For more information about Raleigh International’s global consultation with young people, please contact:

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